

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please insert the following paragraph before line 5 of page 1 of the specification:

The present application claims priority to, and is the National Phase under 35 U.S.C. § 371 of, PCT International Application No. PCT/JP2004/008797, which has an International filing date of June 16, 2004, which designated the United States of America. This application further claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 to JP 2003-183047 filed on June 26, 2003. The entire contents of each of these applications is hereby incorporated by reference.

IN THE ABSTRACT

Please amend the Abstract as follows:

The present invention provides a ~~new~~ gene involved in the growth-promoting function of acetic acid bacteria and a microorganism containing the gene. In particular, the present invention provides a method for enhancing the growth-promoting function of acetic acid bacteria and a method for efficiently producing vinegar containing acetic acid at a high concentration in a short time using such acetic acid bacteria having an enhanced growth-promoting function.